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Forest
Service

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Connor Brook
Watershed Restoration
Scoping Report

Androscoggin Ranger District
White Mountain National Forest
Shelburne
Coos County, New Hampshire

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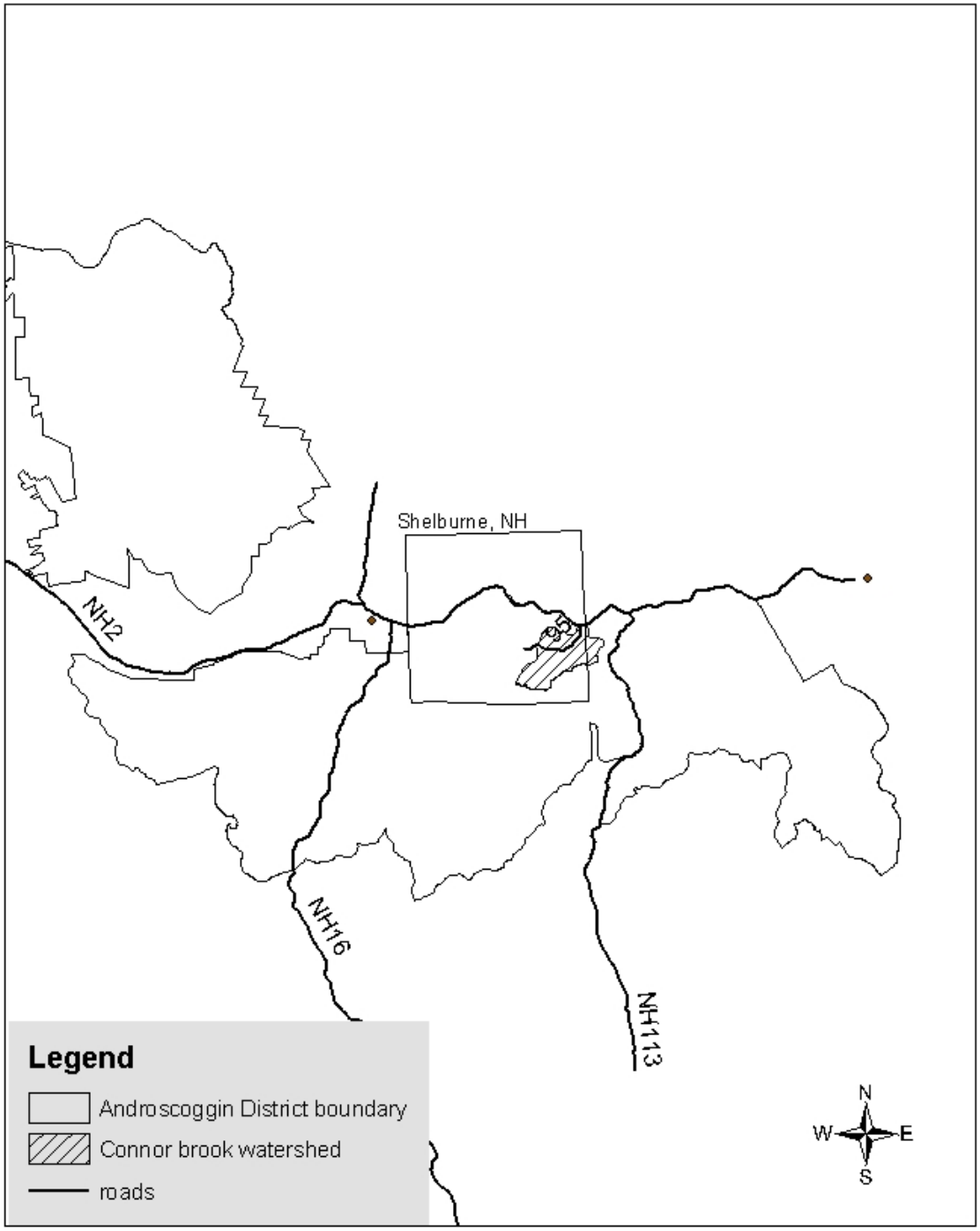
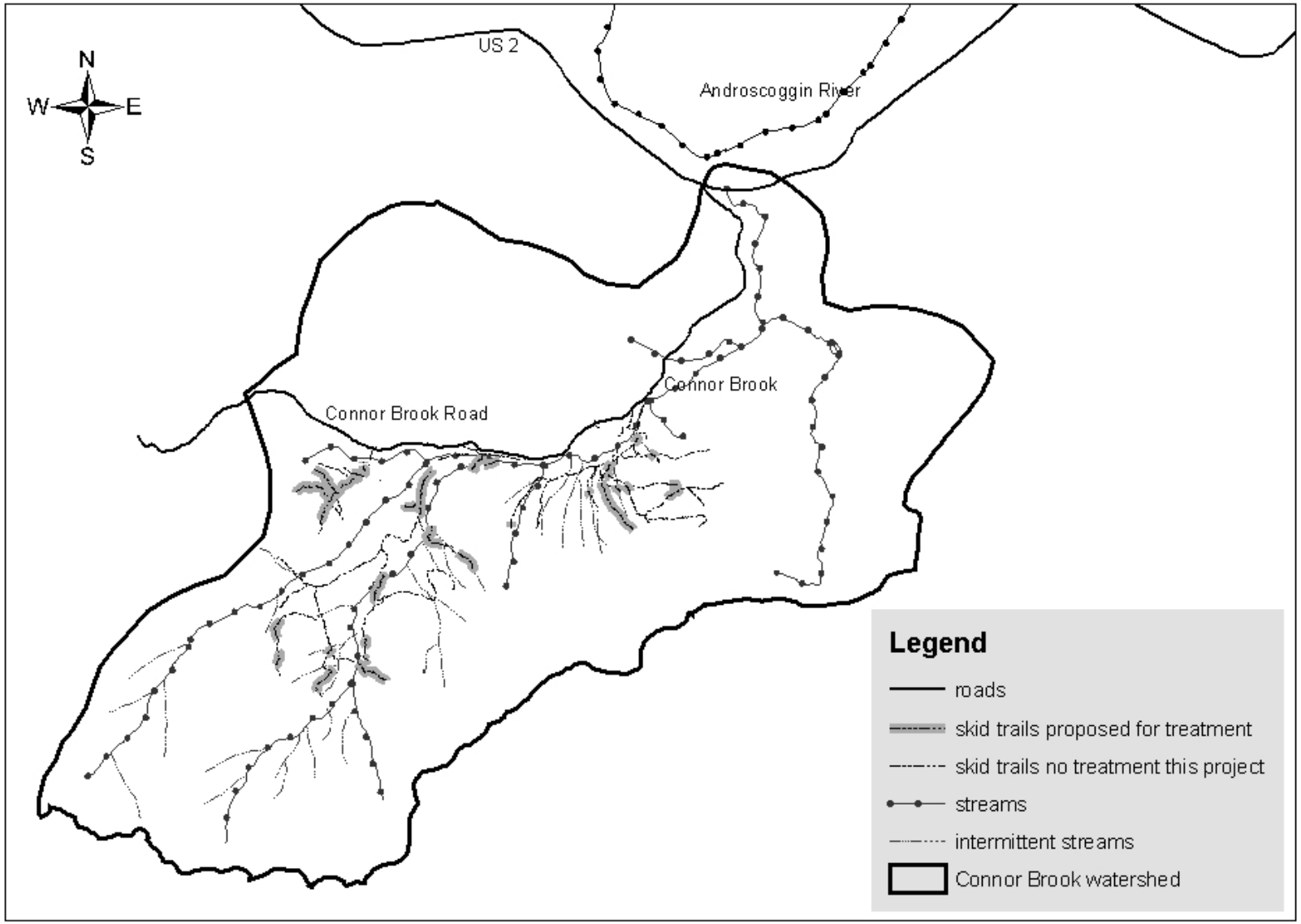
Map 1. Connor Brook Watershed Restoration Project Shelburne, NH



Map 2. Connor Brook Watershed Restoration Project
Shelburne, NH



What is the Forest Service Proposing?

The Androscoggin Ranger District of the White Mountain National Forest is proposing to place downed wood and trees in unstable old roads, skid trails, and some stream tributaries in Connor Brook watershed to increase the stability of the watershed (Maps 1 and 2). It is estimated that 38 segments of old road, skid trail, or tributary segments would be treated within the watershed totaling 2.5 miles. Approximately 4.5 miles of perennial streams and 4 miles of intermittent streams would also be treated within the watershed.

Trees would be cut and laid down in old roadbeds to raise the elevation and eliminate water channels running down old roads. Trees would also be cut and laid down in adjacent tributaries to stabilize stream beds and banks (Map 2). Approximately 500 pieces of wood per mile would be placed on abandoned roadbeds and approximately 300 pieces of wood per mile would be placed in tributaries. Hand crews using chain saws and hand tools would perform this work during snow-free periods over a five-year time span. Trees would be cut-to-length and placed to achieve maximum effectiveness. Some structures may require grouping of trees due to their small diameter size. Trees would not be anchored. The source of trees would be any trees growing within 75 feet of a treated area. Tree species and size used would be based on tree availability adjacent to treated areas and potentially would include hardwoods, spruce, fir, hemlock, and pine trees ranging in size from range 2" to 24" in diameter. Trees would be removed singly or in small groups and would be done under the guidance of the timber sale administrator to maintain forest stand integrity and ensure that Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines are followed. In addition to the use of trees to stabilize old skid trails and road beds, water bars may also be constructed to further aid in rerouting water off these trails and roads. If an abandoned road bed has a steep cut slope which is the major source of sediment, then the angle of this slope may need to be reduced using hand tools.

All necessary wetlands permits will be obtained prior to implementation.

Location and Features of Connor Brook Watershed

The Connor Brook watershed is in Shelburne, New Hampshire and encompasses approximately 3100 acres (Maps 1 and 2). Approximately 1850 acres of the Connor Brook watershed occur within MA 2.1 and 3.1, and 500 acres occur in MA 6.2. The rest of the watershed area includes approximately 50 acres in MA 6.1 and 700 acres in private lands. Elevations in the watershed range from 700 to 2,966 feet. As seen in Map 2, one unnamed intermittent channel and two unnamed perennial channels enter Connor Brook from the north. One unnamed perennial channel and two unnamed intermittent channels enter Connor Brook from the south. Small, unmapped intermittent channels also exist in the watershed. The northern border of the watershed is located where Connor Brook flows into the Androscoggin River. The watershed is bordered on the northwest by Stock Farm Mountain and by Howe Peak to the south.

Background

Field reviews of the Connor Brook watershed found extensive reaches of unstable stream channels and abandoned skid trails and logging roads. Historic logging occurred within the Connor Brook watershed around the turn of the century. Trees were logged from riparian areas and woody material was removed

from streams. Subsequent flooding and scour added to these effects and resulted in portions of the watersheds with less than potential levels of woody material and loss of diverse channel and floodplain characteristics.

In 1969, three large 100-acre clearcuts were harvested in the Connor Brook watershed. These clearcuts likely increased water quantity in the streams. The increased water quantity, combined with no large woody debris in streams to dissipate increased flows, may have contributed to the erosion of the stream bed and banks. A large flood in 1995 may have led to further instability in this channel. Although the roots of live trees on the stream banks are currently contributing to the protection of the stream banks, the Connor Brook watershed has not fully recovered from the impacts of these large clearcuts. Some reaches of the stream are overwidened and large woody debris in the stream channel has not returned to the levels that were likely prior to logging.

A decision was recently made to harvest timber in the Connor Brook watershed. The purpose of the Connor Brook timber sale is to meet desired future condition for habitat diversity and provide timber products as outlined in the Forest Plan (USFS 1986, III-30, 36). All harvesting will protect soils and promote aquatic and riparian values in the Connor Brook watershed as outlined in the current and new Forest Plans (USFS 1986, III- pages 19-23; USFS 2004 Chapter 2, pages 25-30, 33-34).

Purpose & Need and Management Direction

The purpose of this project is to accomplish resource objectives and the desired future condition of the land as established in the Forest Plan. Under the current 1986 Forest Plan (USFS 1986a), the proposed project area lies within Management Areas (MA) 3.1, as designated in the WMNF Plan (III-36). This project will meet the current Forest Plan goal to restore and enhance aquatic habitat (USFS 1986, III-15c) as well as direction in the new Forest Plan to restore areas where past land use practices have degraded aquatic habitat (USFS 2004, pages 1-12).

The need for this project is to stabilize the upper reaches of the Connor Brook watershed to restore and improve watershed conditions within the entire watershed. Old roads and abandoned skid trails would be stabilized by adding wood and constructing water bars to reroute runoff and dissipate runoff energy. This rerouting of water should help promote revegetation of the trail and road beds. Addition of wood to intermittent and the upper perennial channels would slow down water velocity, dissipate stream flow energy during high flows, allowing for increased sediment storage, and stabilize stream beds and banks. Stream stability would be promoted throughout the main stem of Connor Brook. As channel reaches become more stable, habitat conditions would be enhanced for trout populations and other aquatic/riparian dependent species in the lower portions of the Connor Brook watershed.

The purpose, need, and the proposed on-the-ground activities comply with Management Area direction established in the current 1986 Forest Plan (USDA 1986a. III 30-41) as well as the Draft Forest Plan (USDA 2004a. Ch. 2, 2-25 to 2-27).

Environmental Analysis

Our environmental analysis will consider your comments as well as those provided by a Forest Service interdisciplinary team. This project may be excluded from an environmental assessment according to FS

Handbook 1901.15 Chapter 30, Section 31.2 Category 7 ("modification or maintenance of stream or lake aquatic habitat improvement structures using native materials or normal practices").

The environmental analysis will include on-site surveys for rare plants and heritage resources, and will identify if any extraordinary circumstances exist that could result in significant effects to the environment. In accordance with FSH 1909.15 Chapter 30, the following specific resource conditions will be considered:

1) Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species
2) Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds
3) Congressionally designated areas
4) Inventoried Roadless Areas
5) Research Natural Areas
6) American Indians and Alaska Native Religious or Cultural Sites
7) Archaeological Sites, or Historic Properties or Areas

Preliminary Issues

No environmental or administrative issues have been identified to date.

What Decision Will Be Made?

After conducting and reviewing the environmental analysis, including public involvement and resource specialists' input, the District Ranger of the Androscoggin Ranger District will determine whether this project meets criteria for categorical exclusion from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment, including an assessment of any extraordinary circumstances (as defined in FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30.3), and whether or not to proceed with the project as proposed..

How Are You Involved In The Decision?

We are seeking your comments to help identify issues or concerns associated with the proposal to stabilize the Connor Brook watershed. The regulations governing this analysis do not allow appeals of the final decision, so we encourage you to share your comments and concerns now so we can incorporate them into the environmental analysis.

Your comments will also help us decide if there may be significant effects that warrant further analysis in an EA or EIS. If so, there will be further opportunities to comment and there may be an opportunity to appeal the final decision.

How Can You Comment?

In order for your comments to be considered, they should be received by **September 9, 2005** and submitted in one of the following ways:

Written comments

By letter – Androscoggin Ranger District, White Mountain National Forest,
300 Glen Road, Gorham, NH 03581, c/o Katherine W. Stuart, District Ranger
By FAX – (603) 466-2856, ATTN: Connor Brook Watershed Restoration, c/o Katherine W. Stuart
By email – lrowse@fs.fed.us

Oral Comments

Oral comments must be received in person at the Androscoggin Ranger Station or via telephone (603) 466-2713 (TTY 603-466-2856), during normal business hours (8:00am – 4:30pm).

In your comments, please include the following information:

1) Your name, address and telephone number or email address.
2) The project you are commenting on: Connor Brook Watershed Restoration project.
3) Site specific comments about the proposal along with supporting information you believe will help identify issues, develop alternatives, or predict environmental effects of our proposal.

Please direct questions to Pat Nasta, NEPA Coordinator, at the above address or call 603-466-2713 extension 222. Please be aware that your name, address and comments will become part of the public record and may be available for public inspection. If this is a concern, please contact us at your earliest convenience.

References

USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service). 1986. White Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (As Amended). Laconia, NH: USDA-FS, Eastern Region, White Mountain National Forest.

USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service). 2004. Proposed Land and Resource Management Plan. Laconia, NH: USDA-FS, Eastern Region, White Mountain National Forest.
